

OCT 22 1963

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Rusk Gives Pledge on Witnesses

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Associated Press

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An expected row between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee over the Senators' right to obtain information from Rusk's aides failed to materialize yesterday.

Rusk and the subcommittee met first to face in closed session the case of Otto F. Otepka, whom the State Department is firing as its chief evaluator of personnel security risks. The Department has accused Otepka of violating regulations by slipping copies of some secret documents to the subcommittee.

Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.), the subcommittee's acting chairman, told newsmen there was no row during the two-hour meeting with Rusk. Rusk made no comment.

One upshot of the conference, Dodd said, was agreement by the Secretary that members of his staff "will be permitted to appear and testify" before the subcommittee at mutually convenient times.

Dodd said the conference produced no indication, however, that Rusk would drop charges against Otepka. He said the Secretary pointed to a difference between testimony and unauthorized use of classified documents.

Sen. John Tower (R-Texas) has been quoted as predicting a "rather bitter struggle" between the State Department and Congress over the right of congressional groups to investigate the Department's security program.

Dodd, however, said this first conference with Rusk was friendly, and that Rusk will meet again with the subcommittee to discuss more details. Dodd announced no date for the next meeting but said it probably will not be until after the dismissal of Otepka which is scheduled to take effect Wednesday. Otepka is appealing from the dismissal.

Dodd later released a statement declaring "I would consider it a great tragedy if the services of this exceptionally able and experienced security officer (Otepka) were lost to the United States Government on the basis of alleged technical violations. So of his cooperation with the subcommittee."

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